

[Welcome](#) > [Conferences & FAQ](#) > EurECA Conference 2014

EurECA Conference 2014

EurECA Conference, May 29 - June 1, 2014

Experience and Expertise in Christian Pedagogy

by Kirsti Paterson

The venue for the Conference this year was Pilgrim Hall, East Sussex, near to the sunshine coast of Eastbourne.



From the 91 delegates present, there were representatives from 21 different European nations, all contributing to the Workshop Sessions which was the main format of the Conference. Workshops were interactive and informative, offering different educational interests, stages and approaches within the Christian Education context. The high quality of the workshops gave opportunity for concepts, even controversial ones, e.g. teaching Christianity using celebrity culture, to be worked through discussion, along with relevant materials, reference to research and current methodology in different countries. Access the EurECA website to read a follow-up from one of the workshops - **Praise, Reward and Esteem** by **Gill Robins**. Networking with colleagues featured throughout workshop sessions.

Our daily sessions on Friday and Saturday began with Morning Worship taken by Paul Bate and Liviu Caprar, members of EurECA Board. Paul's theme reminded us about peace as given by God - **'the peace that passes all understanding'**. In the setting of Pilgrim Hall's scenic environs, further meditation on this was enhanced. Liviu presented an instructional account of John 21, prompting our thoughts about: **'our mission'**, **'real success with Jesus requires obedience'**; **'the work is ours but the results belong to God'**; **'God will supply all our needs'**.



Morning Worship



Paul Bate

The keynote speakers for the Conference were Trevor Cooling, Professor of Christian Education at Canterbury Christ Church University and John Shortt, Professional Fellow in Christian Education at Liverpool Hope University. Both speakers are well known as Christian educators, authors and conference speakers. Conference participants' anticipation was well rewarded. Trevor's topic, **'Experience and Expertise in Christian Pedagogy'**, enabled us to be introduced to the **What if Learning** concept (an online educational approach) through searching questions: **What am I achieving as a Christian? What are our aspirations for our pupils? What do our pupils imagine they are doing in our classrooms?** When introducing the **What if Learning** concept the importance of the need for this to be a whole school culture was emphasised. Mike Simmonds Director & Education Consultant of 'Go Ministries' assisted Trevor in his presentation, focusing on using this approach to improve governance. A more detailed description of these sessions can be viewed on www.whatiflearning.com



Trevor Cooling

John Shortt delivered an engaging presentation on Relational Pedagogy, pointing us to **our relational teacher - Jesus**. His delivery of Mat. 18 vs1 -14 from memory was riveting. John recounted how, as Christian educators, **'everything we do, we do in the presence of God. Without Him, we can do nothing'**. I would not do justice to John's presentation to be selective in my report so I would encourage readers to access a more detailed account following the link below

<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/33494980/Relational%20Pedagogy%20EurECA%20Conference%201%20>



participants

Matt Kaegi addressing the conference

Conference impressions by Gill Robins

The venue for the 2014 EurECA conference was Pilgrim Hall, a Christian conference centre set in spacious grounds in the south east of England. As with the 2010 conference in Germany, it was held in a congress format. A wide range of workshops were on offer, led by Christian teachers across the age range, lecturers, and representatives of Christian education organisations.

As a first time attendee at a EurECA conference, I wondered what to expect. So, coming with an open mind and ready for a new experience, I was thrilled to find a vibrant conference full of Christian educators from all over Europe, all united in a single task that superseded cultures and contexts: to share their pedagogic experience and to develop their expertise. And the ways in which this was achieved were manifold.

Firstly, there were the workshops themselves. They covered topics as diverse as worship in schools, family and sex education in Europe today, motivational teaching and learning, and how to avoid conflict in the classroom. But despite the diversity of topic, many of the workshops shared a common thread - consideration of what it really means in an increasingly secular age to educate Christianly and to teach from a Christian worldview. And these were no theoretical views. They were practical, inspirational examples; the sort of workshops that make you want to rush back to your classroom to try out the ideas.

Then there were the keynote addresses. Professor Trevor Cooling and Mike Simmonds gave an overview of What If Learning, a way of teaching that reshapes our thinking and explores what teaching and learning could look like when rooted in Christian faith, hope and love. Dr John Shortt considered a biblical basis for relational pedagogy and our need for relationship not only with those whom we teach, but also with what we teach them. We are, he reminded us, in relationship with God, with others and with a wonderful created world.

But the sharing of ideas didn't stop there. Mealtimes, coffee breaks and snatched moments between workshops buzzed with conversation. One evening was filled with brief snapshots of various organisations, and Christian education across Europe and even into Australia. Special interest groups on another evening afforded an opportunity to get a first hand insight into how powerfully God is working. We listened, we shared, we prayed and we were, for just a few days, an example of the shalom-ful relationships that should typify Christian educators.



Saturday afternoon saw trips to Beachy Head and Eastbourne, a rare opportunity to enjoy a typically British afternoon at the seaside. Communion on Sunday morning was a moving conclusion to a very special conference. I left with my head buzzing with new ideas, new thoughts and new encouragement. I left with a better understanding of Christian pedagogy. And above all, I left rejoicing at the great work of the Holy Spirit in schools the length and breadth of Europe.



Beachy Head